

By Tony Martin
Associate Editor

"Why do I go? Well, obviously I go to pray but also, I go to identify myself with other Christians at my school. We want to see God touch the lives of other students. Some of them are pretty messed up, you know, on drugs and alcohol."



HUMBLE BEFORE GOD — This small group of students was one of several groups who continued to pray after the See You at the Pole event at Brookhaven High School September 18. Approximately 100 students attended the early morning prayer service at the school. (BR photo by Tony Martin)

Lum was pleased not only at the response to the Pole event itself, but the rallies and other preparatory events surrounding the designated prayer time. "I've heard from several schools and associations," he said, "and the rallies leading up to the Pole, on the Sundays and Tuesdays prior to, and the Wednesday night following, have been a strong part of

In Waterboro, Maine, one girl has prayed alone for two years in a row. For more information on this yearly event, go to www.svatp.com.

AROUND THE FLAGPOLE — In the early morning fog, students from Brookhaven High School gather around their school flagpole September 18 for See You at the Pole, an annual student-led prayer event. (BR photo by Tony Martin)

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**William H.
Perkins Jr.**
Editor

EDITOR
William H. Perkins Jr.

ASSOCIATE EDITOR
Tony Martin

EDITORIAL ASSOCIATE
Florence Larrimore

LAYOUT/DESIGN
Lennie Young

ADVERTISING
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RECORD, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS
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Fax: (601) 292-3330
E-mail: baptistrecord@mbcb.org**

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Obeying God, not men

A most interesting news item is to be found in the latest issue of Baptist Times, Great Britain's equivalent of The Baptist Record. "Blair approves Welsh Bishop as Primate," declared the large, bolded headline.

According to the article beneath the headline, the Prime Minister of Great Britain has made up his mind regarding the appointment of the next Archbishop of Canterbury — the head of the Church of England who is also known by the title of Primate of All England.

"Tony Blair has decided to appoint the head of the Church of Wales as the next Archbishop of Canterbury... The Archbishop is chosen by the Crown Appointments Commission, which met in secret earlier this summer. It passes two names on to the Prime Minister, who then selects one as a recommendation to the Queen. However, the Prime Minister is also able to refuse both names and ask the commission to provide other suggestions," states the Baptist Times article.

For freedom-loving Baptists and many others like us, the Church of England's entanglement in the secular politics of Great Britain provides a cautionary tale of the high price God's people must eventually pay when we seek to mix the power and authority of the secular world with our spiritual calling.

The first historical notation of the Church of England apparently comes from the records of the Council of Arles in 314 A.D., which was attended by three British bishops. The church continued to develop and eventually forged a relationship with the Roman Catholic Church that recognized the Pope's authority.

The infamous English monarch Henry VIII found the Roman Catholic Church's refusal to bless and annul his various marriages to be a serious inconvenience to his lifestyle. He declared the Pope had no authority in his

domain and moved to install the Church of England as the official church of the country so he could do as he pleased with the sanction of a church body he controlled.

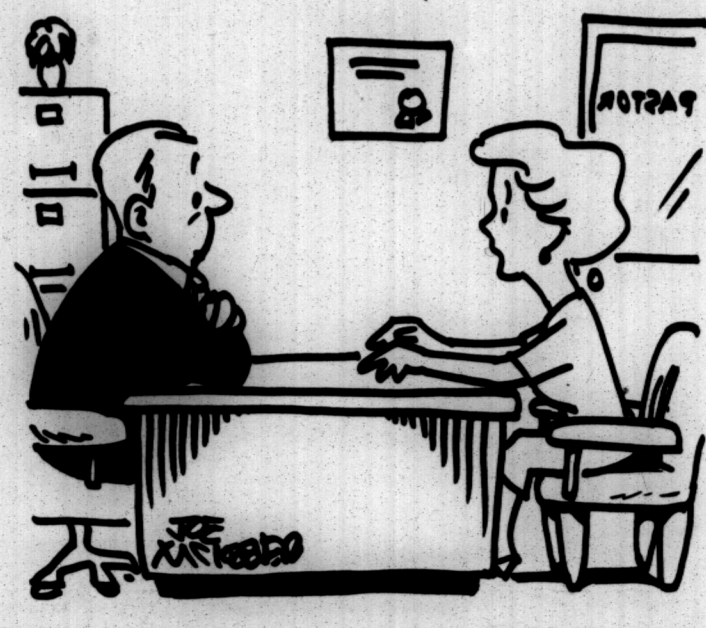
The Act of Supremacy in 1534 made the King (or Queen) of England the titular head of the national church and further solidified the monarchy's political control. Although Queen Elizabeth I granted "independence" to the Church of England in 1558, the ability to appoint the head of the church remains a secular political process to this day.

The whole process of the government appointing a church leader must seem odd to American Christians, who have worshipped for more than 200 years under constitutional protections that keep the government out of church business. The provisions in the U.S. Constitution dealing with freedom of religion were placed in that venerable document, at least in part, to avoid a Church of England situation which the Founding Fathers saw as not in the best interests of the church nor the state.

However, that doesn't mean the government hasn't attempted to interfere with church business over the years. The history of the courts in America is littered with famous cases challenging various political schemes designed to gain control over some aspect of religious freedom — often to just shut us up or deny us our rightful place in the marketplace of ideas.

We've seen it over the years as Christians have attempted to loosely band together to make our voices heard in political debate. We've seen it as Christians have sought to

"BUT PASTOR, THERE HAS TO BE A WAY TO LAY UP TREASURE IN HEAVEN WITHOUT IT COSTING ME ACTUAL MONEY!"



make a difference in some of the hot-button issues of our day, such as church-state separation, abortion, and prayer in schools.

The political establishment would like nothing better than to silence us, to marginalize us in ways that would allow them to carry through on their agendas without interference. We must stand firm against their pressure and their machinations.

Our voices deserve to be heard. To that end, we should remember the words of Peter and John in Acts 5:29, when they were confronted about their witness by the most powerful political/religious body of their day: *We must obey God rather than men!*

May our generation be found faithful to that call, as well.

GUEST OPINION:

Fear and trembling give way to heavenly reassurance

Editor's note: The writer is a young Southern Baptist who went to serve in the Arab world soon after the Sept. 11 attacks. His name is being withheld for security reasons. His story was distributed by Baptist Press.

I arrived at the International Mission Board's Missionary Learning Center in Virginia on Sept. 9, 2001, to train for my new mission assignment in the Middle East. Two days later, airplanes crashed into the World Trade Center in New York City, the Pentagon in Washington, D.C., and the ground near Shanksville, Pa.

That day is a bit of a blur to me now. I realize for most people the details are firmly planted in their memories — maybe because they actually experienced it, whereas I viewed it from a distance, kind of like one of those little glass balls you shake and watch the snow settle over a village.

I do know that somebody made an announcement about the attacks to our missionary orientation group. We discussed what had happened and our feelings. I really didn't understand the magnitude of the situation at that point. While the rest of the world was

being bombarded with news broadcasts, we were living without televisions or radios in our rooms.

After the first day or two, many of us decided not even to discuss it. The general consensus seemed to be that we were more likely to keep our faith in the Lord's will for us if we avoided focusing on the evil of mankind.

Consequently, while the world was absorbed in the 9/11 disaster, we strolled around our bizarrely peaceful camp, isolated in the middle of the lush Virginia countryside. We saw nobody except ourselves, and thanks to our busy days and activity-filled nights, we rarely talked to outsiders.

However, since I would be on the way to the Middle East in a month and a half, I decided I had better become a bit more

educated on the history of the problems there.

The more I read, the more dismayed I became that I had voluntarily chosen to go there! The dismay quickly returned to fright — which was only encouraged by the barrage of phone calls from friends and family telling me I couldn't possibly still go.

Eventually, people stopped trying to convince me not to go and simply assumed I wouldn't. That was when I began to wonder if I had made the wrong decision. I knew I had been called by God to go, but what if I had misunderstood the direction?

Finally, in a moment of panic, I tried to call one of the missionary orientation leaders to tell him I needed to be reassigned someplace else, but I couldn't reach him.

That night, I prayed like crazy that God would show me what to do. Sure enough, the next morning I was filled with peace, and I knew that I would stand by my original decision.

From the moment I arrived in the Middle East last fall, I have never once been persecuted for my faith. I have not once been afraid for my personal safety. The Arab people love to talk about politics — it's a huge part of their lives, but a much larger part of their lives is relationships. I have never met an Arab who would pass up making a friend or risk isolating a friend for the sake of making a political point.

It was interesting to come to the Middle East when I did, because Christian workers were leaving and nobody was coming to take their place. Slowly but surely, however, more people are signing on to join us.

I think that 9/11 — the very event that initially scared people away — will be the thing God uses to make people aware of the desperate need for workers here.

I can only pray that I will still be here when God's plan really comes into focus — and we begin to see His name glorified in this land.

Octogenarian still winning souls for Jesus

OKLAHOMA CITY (BP) — It's a good thing Ralph Shepherd is not a gunslinger. His belt would not be long enough for all of his "victory" notches — but then, too, Shepherd's goal is much different from the Wild West sharpshooters.

Those men had death as their goal. Shepherd has life as his goal. The 83-year-old chaplain has led more than 2,600 people to faith in Jesus Christ — all of them behind prison bars.

He has a no-nonsense approach to witnessing and can immediately quote blocks of Scripture to counteract any excuse a prisoner may come up with for rejecting Jesus.

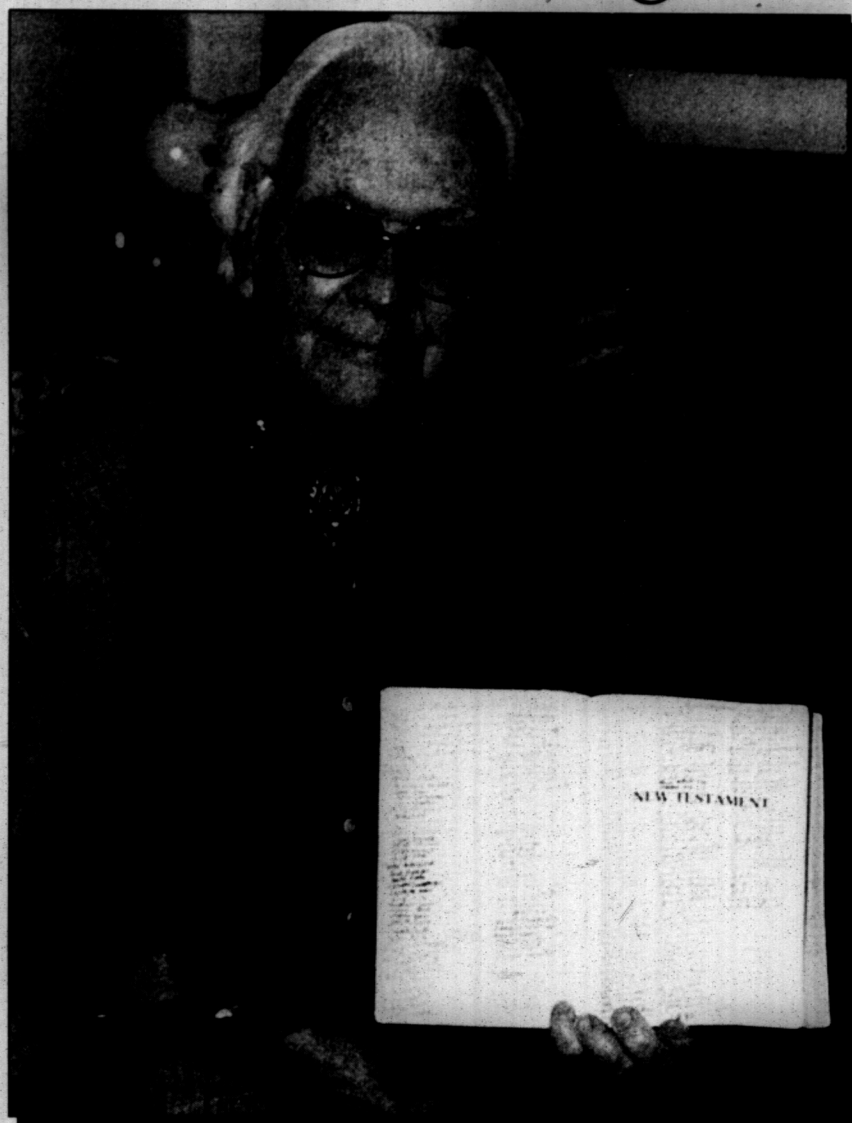
"If I come away from the jail without at least two to three salvations, I've failed," said Shepherd, who has been working in jail/prison ministry for the last 20 years.

Shepherd, a retired chiropractor, has worked the last seven years at the Oklahoma County Jail in Oklahoma City, but started his ministry on death row at the Oklahoma State Penitentiary in McAlester. He also has served at Jess Dunn Correctional Center in Taft and Joseph Harp Correctional Facility in Lexington.

Shepherd, who will be 84 in October, graduated from Carver University in 1943 with a Ph.D. in psycho-bio-physiology and as a chiropractor in 1944. He practiced in Oklahoma and Texas before taking over a mobile home business when his father died, which he operated until 1994.

Shepherd accepted Jesus Christ as his Savior at the age of 12 after his brother died, but it was while he was living in Wichita, Kan., that his passion for witnessing was born.

"There were two deacons at Wellington Place Church where I was a member who had a glow



SPECIAL BOOK — Although it takes lots of pages in several Bibles to do so, prison chaplain Ralph Shepherd has a list of all the names of prisoners who have accepted Jesus as their Savior during his prison ministry in Oklahoma. (BP photo)

about them," Shepherd recalled. "They went out to talk to people; they were soul-winners and I wanted to be like them."

Shepherd, now a member of First Southern Baptist Church, Del City, said he asked the deacons if he could go visiting with them, and then he had the opportunity to give his testimony in a jail. "God gave me a passion to minister to death

row inmates," Shepherd said.

That's when he moved his family to Oklahoma City and drove back and forth to McAlester. "I didn't know anyone at the prison, but the chaplain welcomed me with open arms," he said.

Shepherd was cleared for visitation on death row in two weeks. The process usually takes at least six weeks.

After the riot at the Stringtown prison in the 1980s, where 400 inmates were transferred to the McAlester facility, Shepherd had the privilege of leading many of them to the Lord.

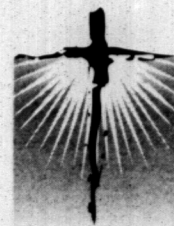
Although he said he believes God has called him to help the lost and forgotten men and

women of the earth, Shepherd said it is not easy ministering to people behind bars. "Listening to people with all sorts of problems takes something out of you," he admitted. "If it were not for God's Spirit, I would probably crumble."

Shepherd noted that some inmates are habitual offenders and some only first-time minor offenders. "Many come to jail because they have broken the laws of man," he said. "Some have had religious experiences, and some have not, and many are confused about God's Word."

Shepherd said he is not easy-going when talking to criminals. "I use different approaches, but I make it difficult," he said. "I don't let them get through too easily."

He said those who are "religious-minded" are the toughest with whom to deal.



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FRONT PAGE**

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"The way I witness depends on the person," he said. "If they reject Jesus, I show them Prov. 1:24-31, which starts out, 'Because I have called, and you have refused ...' and continues, 'then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me.'"

"I tell them they can't come to God when they are ready, but only when He calls them." Shepherd said he leaves the discipling of the new converts to others, but encourages them to read the Bible.

"In the last year, I've led 10 men to the Lord who couldn't see without eyeglasses," he noted. "I went and bought them glasses so they could read the Bible for themselves, and not just take my word for it."

At age 75, Shepherd started riding with the Christian Motorcyclists Association. "I led four people to the Lord," he said.

Looking back

10 years ago

The clean up and recovery unit of Pike Association, McComb, assists in clean-up after Hurricane Andrew strikes southwestern Louisiana. According to Ben Stewart, director of the disaster relief ministry for Pike Association, their work consisted primarily of removing downed trees and other cleanup.

20 years ago

In a rare called meeting, the Executive Board of Woman's Missionary Union dedicates property and approves plans for a new national headquarters building to be built on "Missionary Ridge" south of Birmingham.

50 years ago

In a recent letter to the editor of The Baptist Record, Father F.X. Simcox writes: "One of my Baptist underground workers keeps me well informed about some of the lies that you hypocritical ministers are forever instilling in the minds of your hearers. Why all this talk against smoking, dancing, moderate drinking, card playing, and the like?"

IME guide sent free

RICHMOND, Va. (BP) — Planning a church's annual emphasis on international missions can be difficult, so pastors and missions leaders will find an array of helps in a new resource the International Mission Board (IMB) is sending free of charge this month to every Southern Baptist church. The 2002 International Missions Emphasis (IME) Planning Guide is a 32-page manual filled with practical suggestions to help a church maximize its promotion of the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering (LMCO) for International Missions. A key resource included with the planning guide is a CD filled with samples of adult, youth and children's videos prepared especially for the emphasis, as well as PowerPoint presentations that will help missions leaders present the challenge to a congregation. The CD also contains music videos and links to other resources available on the Internet. The planning guide includes step-by-step instructions, a detailed calendar and missionary testimonies about how LMCO has helped their witness. It also highlights specific ways churches involve their people in the emphasis and promote the offering. Presentation-quality versions of the video segments are available free of charge in DVD and VHS formats from the IMB Resource Center: on the web at <http://resources.imb.org>, toll free at (800) 866-3621 or via e-mail to resource.center@imb.org. The IMB is extending the hours its Resource Center is open until 6 p.m. Eastern time, from Sept. 30-Dec. 6, to handle the enormous volume of orders it typically receives during the IME season.

Trustees back embattled college head

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C. (ABP) — Trustees of Baptist-affiliated Gardner-Webb University have expressed "full confidence" in President Christopher White, despite a censure by the school's faculty over a grade-tampering incident involving a star athlete. Trustees also began a "full and thorough" investigation into the dispute and expressed "profound apology" to Carlos Webb, a former student at the center of the controversy, "for any embarrassment caused to him and his family."

According to a Sept. 10 report in the Shelby (N.C.) Star, Webb lacked the academic standing to play basketball shortly before the start of the 2000-2001 season. Just before the start of the basketball season, White wrote a memo to the Gardner-Webb registrar ordering him to alter grades in a manner that would allow him to be eligible to play.

Faculty members at the school, which is affiliated with the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina, met in a called meeting and handed White a resounding vote of no confidence. Trustees, who were not scheduled to meet before October, put together a hastily called meeting to review actions and charges made in the called faculty meeting.

"We are concerned for the well-being of the faculty, students, staff, and the entire Gardner-Webb community at this time," trustee chairman Thomas Hardin said in a statement following the board meeting. "We assure them that the trustees are seeking to maintain and enhance the operations of the university and its commitment to academic excellence," he said.

Basic Training yields church planting skills

By Tony Martin
Associate Editor

"The single most effective evangelistic methodology under heaven is planting new churches," wrote church growth expert Peter Wagner. The Church Planting Department of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board has risen to this challenge by sponsoring the first Basic Training conference in Mississippi for church planters at Lake Tiak-O'Khata near Louisville on September 18-20.

The conference, Basic Training for Church Planters, covered 15 units in an

intensive time of study. The conference included church planters, their spouses, and other team members.

According to Ed Deuschle, director of the Church Planting Department, "The conference exceeded my expectations. We had 12 church plants represented. The interest of the various teams was very high -- they were motivated, and were able to leave with a strategic plan in mind."

The training event was led by Gerald Colbert, North American Mission Board (NAMB) Mentor/Basic Training Unit Manager. Colbert, who began as a church planter in 1977, has been with NAMB since 1994.

Units covered in the training event included foundations for church planting, vision, core values, mission statement, building relationships, people strategies, leadership development, and the master plan, among others. Each unit had three parts: church planting concepts, spiritual transformation, and skills to learn.

How effective was the training? Bryan Presson, pastor of Eagle Ridge Community Church, Raymond, said, "This was helpful because it enabled me to see the big picture, to get a long-term view of church planting. What's more, I got a lot of encouragement from others. There were a lot of folks like us, just coming out of the chute, and it's great to hear how creative others are in ministry. While each one of us might do things differently in our particular area, it was a great time to swap ideas."

Wade Humphries, pastor of Longview Point Church in Hernando, agrees. "It was terrific. It helped my team and me learn to think through all the issues of church planting. It helped us prioritize what we were doing. We've just had our third Sunday as a new church, and it helped us clarify our mission and vision. Plus, the presenters were great."

When asked why there was such a pressing need for new church plants in Mississippi, Deuschle said, "What we've found is that in a 100-year period the state of Mississippi has experienced an 83% increase in population, but only a 33% increase in Southern Baptist churches. In 1900, there was one Southern Baptist Church for every 993 persons living in the state. In the year 2000, there was one Southern Baptist church for every 1,370 persons in the state."

"There are over two million unchurched Mississippians today," Deuschle pointed out. "NAMB tells us that there is not a county in America that has more church people than it did 10 years ago."

For more information, contact Ed Deuschle at (800) 748-1651, or in Jackson, (601) 292-3361. E-mail at edeuschle@mbcb.org.



BASIC INFO — A group from New Life Church in Gulfport ponder the volumes of information presented at the Basic Training Conference for church planters September 18-20. (BR photo by Tony Martin)

Great Commission Network convenes in Jackson

By Rob Sugg
Correspondent

The Great Commission Network is a fellowship of Southern Baptist churches seeking to gather and share information relating to local church involvement in fulfilling the Great Commission.

Each participating church seeks to implement an Acts 1:8 strategy for sending their own members on mission. At the same time, they seek to enlist other churches to participate in this growing network.

On August 21-23, 67 participants from 21 different churches and ten different states gathered in the Christian Life Center of First Church, Jackson. They were joined by representatives from the International Mission Board (IMB) in Richmond, Va., the North American Mission Board (NAMB) in Atlanta, and the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board (MBCB) in Jackson.

The group received a strong missions challenge from John Marshall, pastor of Second Church, Springfield, Mo. Marshall has led Second Church to model an Acts 1:8 philosophy of missions, by sending over 600 of their members to minister in Springfield, North America, and the world. The goal for every participating church is to emulate this model.

Marshall based his keynote address on Matt. 9:35-38: "Then He said to His disciples, 'The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few.'" He identified eight power images concerning the harvest and the shortage of laborers. He concluded with the reminder that Jesus instructed His disciples to "Beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest," pointing to the need to pray long and often for God to raise up laborers from Baptist churches to go into the harvest field.

The participants were introduced to internet technology that will allow churches to post large amounts of information on a web page that other churches can access. This web site is secure so churches can tell about their work in "gray countries" of mission involvement.

There was an opportunity to receive practical, "how-to" information from those who have worked through the process of learning how to adopt and minister to an unreached people group, how to relate to missionaries on the field and on their stateside assignments, how to train teams before sending them into their target area, and how to make contact with other churches interested in the same geographical region.

A highlight of the meeting was a presentation by Ken



EXPLAINING MINISTRIES — Lee Thigpen (standing), director of community missions at First Church, Jackson, speaks to a large group assembled at First Church for the August 21-21 meeting of the Great Commission Network. Thigpen detailed the work of the church in community ministries. (BR special photo)

Rhodes, director of MBCB Missions Mobilization, relating how MBCB is working to build a network of mission-minded churches in Mississippi. He also brought four of Mississippi's associational missions directors to the conference so they could catch the vision of how a functioning network could enhance their work.

A major focus of this conference was vision casting — presenting the need for missions involvement and allowing different churches to relate what they are doing in various parts of the world.

The group was also introduced to the concept of a Missions Mobilization Movement, when many churches catch the vision of fulfilling the Great Commission and begin to send volunteer missionaries into all the world. God is glorified when His Body obeys His command to be on mission with Him.

Sugg and his wife Nan are missionaries-in-residence at First Church, Jackson. They previously served for 21 years as IMB missionaries to Taiwan.

PUT ON YOUR BRAKE LIGHTS!

One day while sitting in a church fellowship hall, a lady sitting across the table from me said, "Charlie is truly a miracle." As she said that, she nodded toward Charlie Cummings who was sitting beside me. I answered, "He is?" She responded, "He certainly is!" I could tell that something had happened to Charlie's left arm and hand, but no one had said anything about it and I didn't feel comfortable asking. After the lady's statement about Charlie being a miracle, he began to tell me the story of how three years earlier he had gotten his left arm and hand caught in a hay bailer. Charlie had been working alone out in a hot field with temperatures rising around 102 degrees. As he related the events, I could hardly believe that someone could survive what he had been through; yet, there he was, sitting beside me telling his story.

Without being too graphic, suffice it to say that on that day Charlie got his arm and hand caught in the hay bailer and rather than bailing hay, it mangled and shredded his arm. Of course, the immediate danger was that he would bleed to death with no one there to help or drive him to the hospital. He was not only out in the field alone; he was out off the main road a good distance. Charlie had to figure out some way, with only one functioning arm left, to get help.

Caught in that "do what you have to do" mode of life and brought on by desperation, Charlie crawled up on the tractor and got it started. He managed to get the tractor in gear, all the while holding up his injured arm in order to slow the bleed-



Directions

Jim Futral, executive director-treasurer
Mississippi Baptist Convention Board

ing. He guided the tractor all the way over to the main road where cars were passing by and that is exactly what the cars did — they continued to pass him by! He said he didn't have any way of knowing how many cars passed as he waved and held his injured arm up, but it certainly seemed like a lot. Finally, Charlie said he saw the sweetest sight he had ever seen in his life: a driver that had passed by began putting on her brake lights. Somebody was finally stopping to help him and Jackie King was her name. Jackie became the instrument that God used to save Charlie's life.

Jackie ran up to a nearby house and had them call 911. She then rushed back to Charlie where she began to take care of him, trying to sustain his life until help arrived. Years before this moment, Jackie King had taken a "First Responder Emergency Help" course. She had never used the skills or information she had gained through that training until this hot summer day in August when she became the first on-site responder to help Charlie Cummings. Jackie said she had wondered many times to herself if she would ever use the training she had acquired, but out there near that field it quickly became apparent that she had prepared for this very moment!

Soon other people began to stop and Jackie began to instruct folks on what to do. She orchestrated the plan that would literally save Charlie's life. Eventually, Charlie was on his way to the hospital in Pontotoc. The stay there was short and then it was on to North Mississippi Medical Center for more precise help. From there, he was taken on to a hospital in Memphis where his life hung in the balance for several days. After his hospital stays, surgeries, rehabilitation, time and prayers, and encouragement and support, Charlie Cummings finally came home. He now has some use of an arm and hand that initially was all but gone. Charlie remarked, with his dry humor, "It's not as useful as it once was. Mainly, it just carries my watch."

Listening to Charlie tell his story of the miraculous series of events that enabled him to live, I began to think of the wonderful story Jesus told about the man we call "The Good Samaritan." Actually, the story is not titled that by Jesus. Instead, we have given the story that title. Jesus simply called the man "a certain Samaritan." Like the man who fell among thieves and was left for dead, folks just kept passing by Charlie until, thank God, somebody hit their brake lights.

Somebody finally stopped!

Have you ever noticed how many people you pass by every day on your way to work, or on your way to get something to eat, or on your way home, or on your way to wherever? We are busy folks in a bustling world and we pass by far too many people who we could help. Their tire may not be flat, but their spirits are. Their leg may not be broken, but their heart is. They may not have a bleeding gash on their skin, but their emotions may be ripped. You and I may have the opportunity to be "first-responders" at critical points in someone's life. We may be there, not by our own design, plans, or timing, but by God's and we can make a difference.

I have never gotten my hand or arm caught in a hay bailer, but like many of you, I have gotten my life tangled up in the stuff and substance of this world. There have been times when I felt I would not have made it had it not been for someone putting their brake lights on — someone stopping to pick me up when I could not get up by myself. As I look back over my life, there were probably hundreds of such moments, but only about a half-dozen that are most vivid. Those were moments when it seemed that if I could not have seen someone's brake lights come on, I would have been a goner.

God is so good and He has prepared so many people to bless so many others. Wherever you are going today, it may be that you will need to see somebody's brake lights come on. It also may be that you will have the opportunity to stop and help that precious life everyone else is passing by. Today, put on your brake lights!

2002 MBC hotels, motels are listed

The following list of hotels and motels is provided for those people requiring overnight accommodations during the 167th annual meeting of the Mississippi Baptist Convention (MBC) on October 29-30 at First Church, Jackson. All hotels and motels listed are at Exit 96-B (High Street) on Interstate 55, less than five minutes from the meeting site. When making reservations, be sure to mention the MBC annual meeting. All room rates are plus tax. Asterisk (*) indicates complimentary breakfast.

Best Western*
Double/King: \$59
(601) 969-6555
725 Larsen St.

Clarion Hotel
Double/King: \$65
(601) 969-2141
400 Greymont Ave.

Hampton Inn*
Double/Single: \$69
(601) 352-1700
320 Greymont Ave.

Holiday Inn Express*
Double/Single: \$67.95
(601) 948-4466
310 Greymont Ave.

Red Roof Inn
Double: \$45.99
(601) 969-5006
700 Larson St.

Hawkins: AB experiencing 'best, worst' times

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — The Annuity Board (AB) of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) is experiencing "some of the best times in the midst of some of the worst of times," AB President O.S. Hawkins told the SBC Executive Committee Sept. 16, acknowledging his paraphrase of the famous line from Charles Dickens' Tale of Two Cities.

"These are challenging times, obviously, for us. We have a national economy that is continuing to go south. We have markets that are bear markets now. We're struggling to recover, and it looks like it might be a little longer than some people thought it might be," and, Hawkins said, "We're in the midst of a medical insurance crisis that's affecting everybody across this country."

The Annuity Board, he noted, is different than other SBC entities which have a primary focus on "getting the message of Jesus Christ out" through missions and ministry.

"Our primary focus," he said, "is on the messenger, that pastor, that church worker, that messenger of Jesus Christ."

In the Annuity Board's retirement plans, Hawkins said, "we obviously can't control what happens with the stock markets, but what we can seek to control is what happens with our own investment funds."

The 13 retirement/investment funds offered by the board are "measured against certain benchmarks, not benchmarks that we arbitrarily decide, but against benchmarks in

the industry," Hawkins said. "In the midst of a difficult time in these markets through the first two quarters of this year," he reported, "of our 13 funds, over half of them have exceeded their respective benchmarks."

Currently, Hawkins acknowledged, "It's not very encouraging for the pastors who have seen their retirement funds decrease" over the months but, he said, the good news so far in 2002 is "mainly because of our style," which is both "multi-asset," encompassing the 13 different funds, and "multi-management," with a "multi-style" approach among fund managers, "to help diversify our people's funds, and we're finding out that that's working very successfully."

"The big picture," Hawkins added, "is that history is on our side ... [and] we know that sooner or later they're going to come back."

An unusual development so far this year is a 12% increase over last year in retirement contributions, Hawkins said, attributing the upswing to expanding marketing efforts by the board among potential participants.

The Annuity Board's health insurance programs, meanwhile, are "our biggest challenge right now," Hawkins reported. "... We've got an industry that's out of control." Among the problems, he said, are soaring prescription drug prices.

The board receives no Cooperative Program funds "to help supplement this program for our pastors," Hawkins stated. "I'm not suggesting that we should [receive

SBC funds] but just reminding you there's nothing there to subsidize" increased health-care costs. "We have a large asset base at the Annuity Board, but we're just stewards of scores of thousands of pastors' retirement accounts, and obviously we would not use those to help supplement the insurance program, so it comes down to the sheer fact of ... claims paid out versus premiums received."

Denominational governance can make a difference for some church-based health insurance programs, Hawkins said. "The Methodist church, for example, can mandate that all of their churches across the nation be a part of their insurance program, and it helps diversify the risk that's out there. But our very ecclesiology of local church autonomy works against that for us," along with the fact "that many of our churches are very small and I know so many young pastors ... whose wives are working — the first time this has happened on this scale in Southern Baptist life. Many of [the wives] work for corporations where they get insurance packages."

Hawkins also stated, "One-half of the claims we paid out in the insurance program last year were paid out for what are called 'preventable diseases.' In other words, by and large, our folks aren't nearly as healthy as they ought to be — and half of what we paid out in claims, we paid out to people who, at an industry standard, [had] preventable diseases."

JUST FOR THE RECORD

Women on Mission (WOM) of Steele Church, Scott Association, held a Back to School bash on Aug. 25. School supplies were collected for needy children. The supplies were distributed between Scott Central Elementary, Forest, and Sebastopol Elementary School. Members also presented Linda Warren, outgoing director, with a gift of appreciation for all she had done for WOM.



Women on Mission of Steele Church, Scott Association

Weathersby Church, Mendenhall, will celebrate its centennial celebration on Oct. 6. Activities will include Sunday School, 9 a.m.; worship, 10:30 a.m.; dinner on the grounds; and afternoon program. Foy Killingsworth is pastor.

Cruger Church, Cruger, will celebrate its 100th year on Saturday, Oct. 26, 6:30 p.m., with gospel singing featuring Embrace; and Sunday, Oct. 27, 10 a.m., Jim Futral, Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, as guest speaker; and lunch served following the service.



The Favorite Few of First Church, McComb

The Favorite Few, special education Sunday School class at **First Church, McComb**, enjoyed a week of Bible school activities including Bible study, music, crafts, and special visitors from the community.

Cambridge Church, Gautier, will celebrate its 25th anniversary on Sept. 22. C. D. Faggard, one of the founders, will be the special guest for the day. Arnold Bridges will direct the music. Al Green, church's first pastor will bring the message. A fellowship dinner will follow the morning worship hour.

Macedonia Church, Lee Association, will celebrate its 90th anniversary on Oct. 6. Dwight Brown is pastor.



Crusaders of Eastlawn Church, Pascagoula



Women on Mission of Eastlawn Church, Pascagoula

The Mary Alice Ditsworth Crusader Chapter of **Eastlawn Church, Pascagoula**, Bill Bailey, teacher, shipped 60 stuffed animals to Hong Kong in July to assist Scott and Debbie Smith in their ministry. In August, the chapter teamed with the Women on Missions (WOM), Imogene Stockman, director, and sent \$130.70 in dimes to the World Hunger Fund. Crusaders (pictured, from left) are Gabe Thomas, Kyle Bryant, Josh Sherman, Donovan Gordon, Brandon Byrd, and Skylar Hurd. WOM (pictured, from left) are Gloria House, Helen Jackson, Ruby Alexander, Peggy Soljan, Virginia Kirk, Robbie Stevens, Peggy Brett, Martha Edwards, Judy McCullough, Imogene Stockman, Vicki Winstead, Lucy Turner, and Brenda Williams.

Community Back to School Bash was held Aug. 28 in Flora. There were over 300 youth in attendance. This event came about by the idea of Dwayne Parker, minister of youth and education at First Church, Flora. He sought out the help of other youth ministers and leaders in the local and surrounding area as well as area businesses. Other churches participating were Flora United Methodist Church, Franklin Church, Damascus Church, Ogden Church, Bentonia Church, and Twin Lakes Church.

Mary McDonald, a multi-talented musician of Knoxville, Tenn., will present a piano concert at **First Church, Batesville**, Oct. 6 at 7 p.m. Composer, arranger, producer, pianist, and organist, she is president of Monarch Music, a division of the Lorenz Corporation, Dayton, Ohio. For additional information, call the church at (662) 563-7655.

Woodland Hills Church, Jackson, is offering a beginning Spanish class on Saturdays, at 9

a.m. For more information, contact Deb Addington at the church office. The phone number is (601) 981-1441.

Randall Jackson, pastor of



Randall (left) and Wylie

Leesburg Church, Rankin Association, baptized his 91-year-old grandfather, James Wylie, at Gum Branch Church, Winston Association, as James Yarbrough, Wylie's long-time pastor, looks on. Wylie was converted during revival services at Gum Branch this spring. Skeet

Davis was the evangelist.

First Church, Troy, Pontotoc Association, will celebrate its 25th anniversary on Sept. 29. Services will begin at 10:30 a.m. Jerry Mixon, Stewardship Cooperative Program Consultant with the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, will be the guest speaker. Danny McGee, Greg Reed, and Rob Sargent, former music ministers of First Church, will lead the music. Lunch will be served after the worship services. There will be singing in the afternoon. Greg Herndon is pastor.

Calling Out the Called, an evangelistic service including those who have been called into the ministry from **Holly Church, Alcorn Association**, will be held Oct. 5. Guest speakers will be Trent Nethery, pastor of South Corinth Church, 3 p.m.; Otis Hinton, pastor of Temple Church, Paris, Tenn., 4:30 p.m.; and Gary Watkins, pastor of First Church, Collierville, Tenn., 7 p.m.

Musical guests will include the Sogie Boys and the Robinson's of Corinth, and Mark Carmack of First Church, Collierville, Tenn. The worship leader will be Burton Gaar of Walnut. A meal will be served at 5:30 p.m. Tony Morrow is pastor. Call (662) 286-3474 for more information.

Youth in Action members Chris Johnston, Savannah Parker, Onnica Johnston, Morgan

Parker, and Sherry Henry painted life-size murals of Noah's Ark animals in the nursery of **Barnes Crossing Church, Saltillo**. Tonya Johnston, director, and husband Anthony assisted in completing the project with new windows treatments and bedding. J. D. Johnson is pastor.



Youth in Action of Barnes Crossing Church, Saltillo

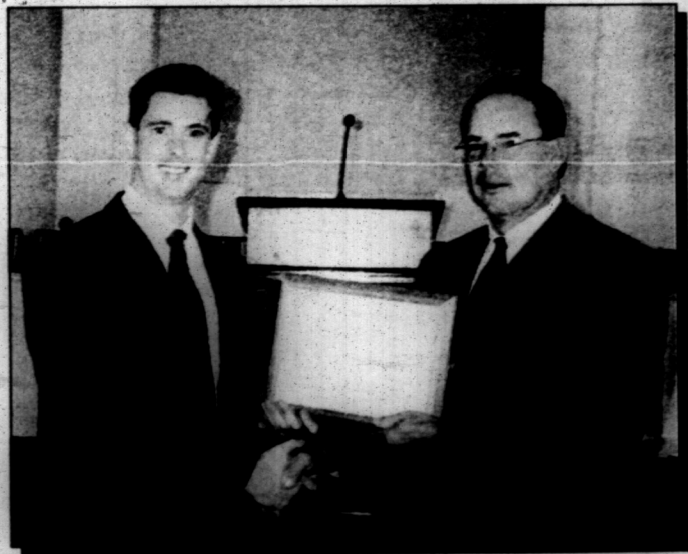
NAMES IN THE NEWS

Rodney Carver, Leslie Burge, and Josh Brewer from Grace Memorial Church, Gulfport, were selected to serve on the summer staffs of M-Fuge Youth Camps this summer. Carver served in Denver, Colo., as the videographer. Burge and Brewer served in Charleston, S. C. Burge served as children's ministry site leader and Brewer served as camp pastor.



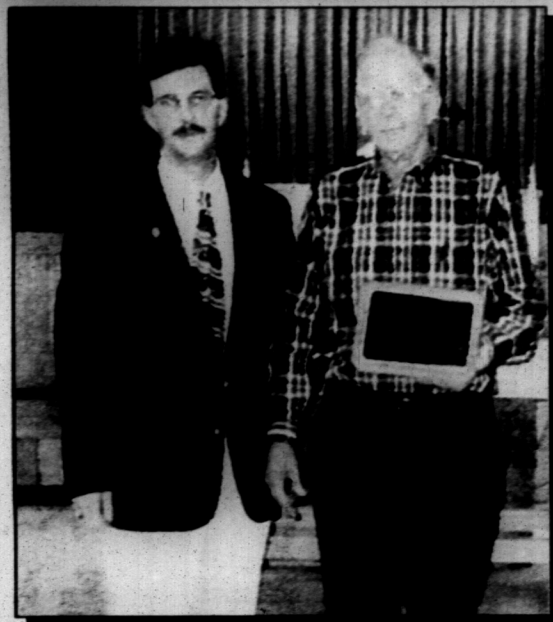
Carver, Burge, and Brewer

K y l e Cannon, pastor of Walnut Grove Church, Walnut Grove, recently received his ordination certificate. He was also licensed and ordained by Walnut Grove Church. Cannon is a native of Linden, Ala., and a graduate of New Orleans Seminary. Pictured with Cannon (left) is Paul D. Sanders, chairman of deacons.



Cannon (left) and Sanders

Oakland Church, Walnut, recently presented **Kelton Melton** with a plaque of appreciation for serving as Young Adults Sunday School Teacher for 30 years (1972-2002). Pictured (from left) are Sean Tutor, pastor; and Melton.



Tutor (left) and Melton

Barney C. Watkins is available for revivals and pulpit supply. To contact Watkins, call (662) 547-9937 or write him at Rt. 2, Box 167A, McCool, MS 39108.

Pinckney Church, Union, ordained **Billy Barrett** as a deacon on Aug. 11. Pictured (from left) are Mike Fondren Sr., pastor; and Barrett.

Gatesville Church, Crystal Springs, honored four members on Sept. 8 for perfect Sunday School attendance. Matt Armstrong, pastor, presented pins to **Willie Mae Hinton**, 5 years; **Margie Spayberry**, 3 years; **Patricia Jones**, 1 year; and **Olivetti Roberts**, 5 years.

D a n n y Wildman, deacon chairman, presented **M i c h a e l**

Harvey a certificate of deacon ordination at Wade Church, Moss Point. Pictured (from left) are Harvey and Wildman.

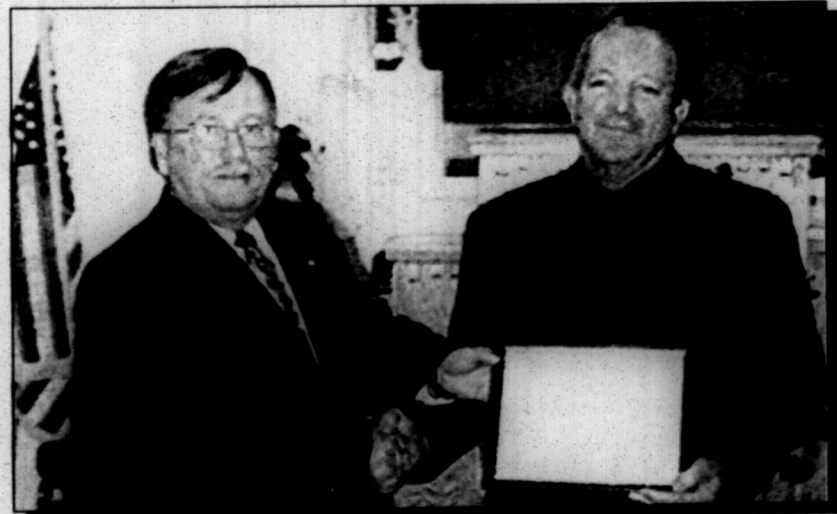


Harvey (left) and Wildman

Holly Church, Alcorn Association, held a deacon ordination and installation service on Aug. 25. **Keith Fields** was ordained into service while Milton Davis was reinstated into active duty. The deacon body is pictured with Tony Morrow, pastor.



Deacons of Holly Church, Corinth



Fondren and Barrett



Sunday School recognition at Gatesville Church, Crystal Springs

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(*I have sinned.*)
2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death.
(*I repent.*)
3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you.
(*I believe in Jesus.*)
4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life. From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with him.
(*I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.*)

But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name (John 1:12).

If you make a decision for Jesus Christ today, contact a local Baptist church for spiritual guidance.

SWBTS alums to meet on October 29

The Mississippi chapter of the Southwestern Seminary (SWBTS) Alumni will hold their annual luncheon at noon on October 29 at the Steam Room Grill on I-55 North. Guest speaker will be Keith Rosenbaum, SWBTS director of counseling and testing. For ticket information, contact Dennis Salley at (662) 234-8151.

BAPTIST COLLEGE NEWS

Homecomings

Gamari Road, Greenville: Sept. 29; worship service and singing, 10:30 a.m.; followed by covered dish luncheon; Jack Demoney, former pastor, guest speaker; Scott Frank, pastor.

Hope, Philadelphia: Sept. 29; 10 a.m.; lunch at noon in fellowship hall; Wayne Burkes, speaker.

Tillatoba, Tillatoba: Sept. 29; Sunday School, 9:45 a.m.; worship, 11 a.m.; covered dish dinner at noon; Cecil Sutley, guest speaker; special music with the Steadman's Quartet, Cleveland, at 2 p.m. Harvey Vance is pastor.

Shelton, Moselle: 95th year; Oct. 13; Sunday School, 10 a.m., followed by worship at 10:50 a.m.; services will conclude with dinner on the grounds; Ronald Bishop, Jones County Junior College, guest speaker; Jesse Smith, Jones County Junior College, music; Charles Brady, pastor.

French Camp, French Camp: Sept. 29; Sunday School, 10 a.m.; worship, 11 a.m.; dedication of remodeled sanctuary and lunch, followed by special music in the afternoon. Tony Fortenberry, pastor.

Antioch, Amory: Oct. 6; noon meal and afternoon singing; special guests for the evening singing will be Saved By Grace from Amory; Antioch was organized in 1880; James Rutledge, pastor.

Holly Springs, Foxworth: Oct. 13; Sunday School, 10 a.m.; worship, 11 a.m.; dinner on the grounds; and afternoon singing; Billy James of Philadelphia, former pastor, guest speaker; the church was established in 1872.

Wheeler Grove, Corinth: Sept. 29; 10:30 a.m.; lunch served; The Heismen will be singing.

First Faith, Batesville: Oct. 6; worship, 11 a.m.; fellowship meal to follow; song service will include The Gentry Kids from Water Valley; Wesley Nicholas, pastor, speaker.

The following students were elected by their peers to serve on the Student Government Association at **Blue Mountain College** for the 2002-2003 school year: Pictured (from left, front row) are Heather Carpenter, Dumas, president; Andrea Harris, Tupelo, vice-president; Rose Marie Upchurch, Walnut, secretary; Sandra Foster, Meridian, treasurer; Kati Cappleman, Rock Spring, Ga., senior attorney; Cristy Turner, Middleton, Tenn., junior attorney; (back row) Jean Harrington, Blue Mountain, staff representative; Dawn Russell, Eupora, senior representative; Lori Sanders, Meridian, junior representative; Lisa Amburn, Memphis, Tenn., sophomore representative; Marsha Price, Baldwin, freshman representative; Kim Walker, Corinth, faculty representative. Not pictured: Veronica Gibbs, Walnut, commuter representative.

In the September 2002 issue of U. S. News & World Report, **Mississippi College (MC)** was one of only two universities in Mississippi to be given

a ranking in their category. MC was ranked in the 50 top schools as number 32 in Best Universities - Masters for the Southern region. MC and Mississippi University for Women are the only two universities in the state of Mississippi that have been ranked in their category. MC was also listed ninth in the top fifteen universities in the South as a best buy in the U.S. News and World Report.

REVIVAL DATES

Center Terrace, Canton: Oct. 6-9; Sunday, 10:30 a.m. and 6 p.m.; Mon.-Wed., 7 p.m.; Sonny Adkins, Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, evangelist; Ian Richardson, Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, music; Jerry Nixon, pastor.

Unity, Moselle: Sept. 29-Oct. 2; Sunday School, 9:30 a.m.; worship, 10:30 a.m.; Training Union, 5 p.m.; and worship, 6 p.m.; Mon.-Wed., 7 p.m.; Gary Bowlin, Summit, evangelist; Thom Lambert, music; Valton Douglas, pastor.

Edwards, Edwards: Oct. 6-9; Sunday, 11 a.m.; Sunday-Wednesday, 6 p.m.; John G. McCall, Clinton, evangelist; Jack Hollingsworth, Utica, music; Russell M. McIntire, pastor.

New Sight, Brookhaven: Sept. 29-Oct. 2; Sunday, 11 a.m. and 6 p.m.; Mon.-Wed., 7 p.m.; Jim McNeil, Tower Grove Church, St. Louis, Mo., evangelist.

Como, Como: Oct. 6-8; Sunday, 11 a.m. and 5 p.m.; Mon. and Tues., 7 p.m.; Alan Kilgore, Batesville, evangelist; Joe Thompson, Como, music; Andy Brasher, pastor.

Wyatte, Senatobia: Oct. 6-9; 7 p.m.; Don Baggett, Tupelo, evangelist; Scott Rogers, pastor.

First, Collins: Sept. 29-Oct. 2; Sunday, 11 a.m. and 1:30 p.m.; Mon.-Wed., 7 p.m.; Jim Futral, Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, preaching; Graham Smith, Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, music.



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Blue Mountain College Student Government Association

The Office of Continuing Education at **Mississippi College (MC)** will host the Capital Area Student Council Workshop on Oct. 30 (Jr. High) and Oct. 31 (High School) from 9 a.m. to noon in the Coliseum on campus. School advisors interested in their Student Council attending this workshop may call the Office of Continuing Education at (601) 925-3263 or 925-3265 for more information.

William Carey College (WCC) and the Area Development Partnership (ADP) will present the annual Small Business Leadership Award Luncheon at noon on Oct. 16 in the Wilkes Dining Hall on the Hattiesburg campus. WCC and ADP established the award in 1990 in honor of the late Joe Roberts who was a WCC faculty member for several years up to the time of his death. Buddy Wiggins, first vice president - Investments, Smith Barney of Hattiesburg, will be the keynote speaker. Call (601) 318-6199 for ticket information and reservations by Oct. 11.

Modena Lowrey Berry Auditorium. Lieutenant Colonel Gerald Ketchum, a native of Tippah County and witness of the Pentagon attack, was the keynote speaker. The event was designed "to help everyone from school children, to those who have fought in America's wars, and those who responded to the 9-11 crisis, remember the events of Sept. 11, what they cost us, and what they mean to us."

Mississippi College (MC) will sponsor the thirteenth spring break trip, March 6-15, 2003. The United Kingdom (UK) itinerary will include the highlights of Scotland and England. Participants will include faculty, staff, students, alumni, and friends. For additional information and a detailed brochure, contact either Billy Lytal at (601) 925-3428, email: lytal@mc.edu or Edward McMillan, (601) 925-3497, email: emcmillan@mc.edu. Either may be contacted by mail at Mississippi College, Clinton, MS 39058.

Finding the time to make a difference.

Susan and her husband, Max Draughn, are like many young couples today - busy. "My husband and I wanted to make an endowment gift to our church's preschool ministry, but we also knew we didn't have time to deal with managing the investment on a day to day basis. That's where the Baptist Foundation came in," said Susan. "With three young boys, we don't have lots of free time. Having the professional planned giving services from the Baptist Foundation was just what we needed."

Susan and Max wanted to make a difference in the lives of the children at Broadmoor Baptist Church in Madison. "As an accountant, I was comfortable with the people at the Baptist Foundation. I knew what their investment strategies were and that they would stay true to them," said Susan.

The Draughn's were so pleased with the work and ministry of the Baptist Foundation, that they also established a Cemetery Trust for Boyles Chapel Methodist Church in memory of Max's mother. "We're happy with the performance of our investments and we have a good relationship with the good people at the Foundation."



THE MISSISSIPPI BAPTIST FOUNDATION

SUPPORT H.R. 556

Editor:

U.S. Representative James Leach (R-IA) is sponsoring H.R. 556, The Unlawful Internet Gambling Funding Prohibition Act. Eight Congressmen (two Democrats and six Republicans) are cosponsoring the bill.

Under H.R. 556, illegal gambling activities, many of which are conducted offshore, will be prohibited from gaining access to U.S. financial institutions. Wire transfers to known Internet gambling sites, and the banks that represent them, will be forbidden. H.R. 556 also encourages the federal government to work closely with foreign governments to crack down on illegal gambling operations. It is possible that terrorist groups are using gambling activities to fund their murderous plots.

Internet gambling is the crack cocaine of gambling and will contribute to an increase in gambling addictions, family break down, and crime. Gambling is a highly addictive sport that destroys communities and degrades everyone involved in it.

Please call, write, fax or e-mail your Congressman and tell him to support passage of H.R. 556.

Kevin Waller
Meadville

SEEKING PASTOR

Editor:

Precision Valley Church in Springfield, Vt., is seeking a retired pastor to serve as a long-term interim (six to 12 months). This is a challenging position for someone willing to help the church prepare for a full-time pastor and at the same time minister to a responsive community. Housing and a small salary are furnished. If interested, please contact Sandra Mollica, 456 Old Connecticut River Road, Springfield, VT 05156. Telephone: (802) 885-2088. E-mail: mollica@chritmastreesofvt.com.

M. Borders, interim pastor
Precision Valley Church
North Springfield, Vt.

THANKS FOR HELP

Editor:

Guinevere and I want to use this means to say thanks to Macedonian Call Foundation for providing us a car on our recent stateside assignment. This ministry has helped us several times already, and we are very grateful.

James Young
Jessore, Bangladesh

ANNIVERSARY SET

Editor:

Oak Grove Church, Hernando, will celebrate its 150th anniversary on October 6, beginning at 10:30 a.m. We invite the community and all friends to come and honor God's faithfulness to us. A covered dish lunch and a time of fellowship will be held after the service. For more information, call the church at (662) 429-9200.

Ann Robbins
Hernando



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Unsigned letters will not be printed. No multi-copy or form letters will be used.

Each correspondent must include an address and telephone number for verification. In special instances, name may be withheld at writer's request and editor's discretion.

Please include the name of cooperating Mississippi Baptist church where correspondent is a member. (Mississippi Baptists' letters will receive priority when space is limited.)

Letters must be limited to 250 words. All correspondence is subject to editing.

Correspondents should refrain from personal attacks. The opinions expressed in letters to the editor do not necessarily reflect the views of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board.

No more than one letter from any individual will be printed during a three-month period.

When in the judgement of the editor a given issue has received sufficient attention, correspondence dealing with it will no longer be published and a notice will be printed to that effect.

Missionaries commend Mississippi Baptist volunteers

By Paul and Harriet Lawrence
IMB Palestinian team

We wanted to thank Mississippi Baptists for sending 11 of your very best as volunteers this summer to participate in Project Future and Hope. Their willingness to come to an unstable place and do a difficult task is greatly appreciated.

Your volunteers, those from other states, local partners, and our International Mission Board (IMB) team have visited almost 5,000 Palestinian homes in Gaza and the West Bank. Beyond our wildest imagination, we have seen our primary goal accomplished: to share God's love in a tangible way with the Palestinian people.

Recent reports indicate unemployment rates are up to 70% and malnutrition in children around 50%. There are almost daily reports of attacks by one side or the other. With that as a backdrop, volunteers visited homes to say, "God loves you and we love you."

The volunteers listened as Palestinian mothers and

fathers shared their heartaches and fears. Through your generous contributions to the Southern Baptist Convention's Hunger Relief Fund (and the Margaret Lackey State Missions Offering in Mississippi), they were able to give food to many hungry people.

They also delivered school uniforms to 4,500 children in grades one through six.

One volunteer couple whose vast experience included counseling in New York City last fall, conducted a workshop in six different locations to teach parents how to help their children deal with trauma. Three volunteers groups conducted day camps for children whose lives have been disrupted by the current crisis.

Although most of the families we visited were Muslim, we asked almost every family how we could pray for them. The vast majority asked us to pray for peace. We were able to pray with them and would like to ask you to join us in that prayer.

Ask God to bring both political and spiritual peace

to the Palestinian people. May they experience the truth of Jer. 29:11 — *For I know the*

plans I have for you, plans to prosper and not to harm, plans to give you a future and a hope.



IN THE JOB — William Wright, pastor of McDowell Road Church, Jackson, operates a trimmer during the recent Mississippi Baptist mission trip to Palestinian areas in the Middle East. (BR photo by Tim Nicholas)

STAFF CHANGES



Collins

served churches in Alabama.

Carmel Church, Monticello, has called **Roger Collins** as pastor. A native of Hartselle, Ala., he has previously

Collins is a graduate of Athens State University and New Orleans Seminary. He will be leading in revival services beginning Oct. 13. Dinner will be served at the church for the occasion.

Ephesus Church, Forest, has called **Danny Wells** as associate pastor/music and family life. He has served churches in Mississippi, Louisiana, and Alabama. Wells is a graduate of Mississippi College and New Orleans Seminary. Jim Everett is pastor.



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BI-VOCATIONAL MINISTER OF MUSIC sought by church averaging 110 in Sunday School. Please e-mail resume to mwsjgb@vicksburg.com or fax to (601) 636-7574 or mail to Calvary Baptist Church, 2878 Old Hwy. 27, Vicksburg, MS 39180.

NEWHEBRON BAPTIST CHURCH: Part-time youth minister (weekends only); send resumes to: P.O. Box 37, Newhebron, MS 39140 or fax to 601-694-2252.

FAMILY BIBLE STUDY

God Provides

1 Kings 17:1-4; 19:1-18

By Gene Neal

Every person finds himself in need to some extent at one time or another. Needs come in many forms; for example, some are physical, emotional, relational, financial, or spiritual. A defining moment for many people is how they choose to deal with or address those needs. In a secular worldview, individuals pride themselves on self-sufficiency and independence. In fact, many would say that dependence on God is only for the weak or helpless. Unfortunately, even some Christians fall prey to this philosophy and, in the process, miss out on the joy of seeing God meet their needs at every level. We would do well to apply the lessons learned by

Elijah about depending entirely on God.

Elijah was a ninth century B.C. prophet who took a strong stand for God against Baal worship in Israel. His prophecy came against evil king Ahab and his notoriously wicked wife Jezebel. The prophecy was for a severe drought, a direct answer to his own prayer (see James 5:17). Needless to say, this did not make him a popular man, creating some extreme needs in the life of the prophet. Notice the ways God met his needs.

First, God told him to run and hide. During several years of youth ministry I attended many retreats. A fellow minister once told me that we should call them something else as the Christian should never retreat. I beg to dif-



Neal

fer! Many followers of God throughout scripture had times of retreat, even our Lord. God often provides by giving us times of solitude and escape so we can renew our strength and refocus our minds and hearts. We are told in 1 Kings 17:3 that God told Elijah to go and hide. God then proceeded

to tell him how his physical needs for food and water would be met, although God is never obligated to tell us beforehand how He is going to provide. Here we learn the lesson that God cares about the total person. It's interesting that God chose ravens to serve Elijah while he was in hiding. The raven was declared an unclean bird. Without a doubt, Elijah would have never chosen the raven, but he didn't argue with God's choice, did he? Neither should we question God in the methods He chooses to meet our needs.

Next, we find Elijah having to change plans as the brook he had been drinking from dried up.

Does that mean Elijah had done something wrong? No! It simply meant that God had a new lesson for him to learn. This new lesson would be in the town of Zeraphath, which means "refining". That's exactly what God was trying to do with Elijah's faith. Imagine how Elijah felt when he discovered that his source of food, the widow, was so poor that she and her son were planning to starve to death after a last meal. It must have been tempting to think that God had made a mistake. It must have also been tempting to go seek another source of food but, having learned a lesson from the ravens, Elijah trusted God and saw a miracle. How many times have Christians made a mess of things in their own lives and in the lives of others by taking matters into their own hands? Notice, when God's people trust Him; not only do they see God at work but others do as well.

After chapter 17, one would think that Elijah had learned great lessons about the power of God to provide under any

circumstance. Perhaps those lessons helped Elijah in the mighty battle on Mount Carmel as he called down fire from heaven. Elijah truly depended on God to provide, didn't he? Well, he did at times. Then we see chapter 19 with Elijah scared to death of Jezebel and what she was threatening to do to him. God showed Elijah that He had all of creation (through the wind, the earthquake, and the fire) at His disposal to do His bidding. He also showed Elijah that He doesn't always do things in a big, noisy fashion. Sometimes God provides through the gentle whisper.

We must learn the same lessons as Elijah. God sometimes provides in ways we see as strange. He provides for our needs as He sees them, not as we see them. He provides in His perfect timing, not ours. But, most importantly, He does provide!

Neal is pastor of First Church, Quitman.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Having Eternal Life

John 4

By Ginger M. Caughman

The abundant life in Jesus Christ begins now and continues into eternity. This lesson challenges believers to notice opportunities for a Christian witness. The woman of Samaria sought physical water but learned about a deeper thirst and real life in Christ.

Water is wonderful and is provided by God's good creation. (See Genesis 1 and 2).

Some water trivia. Water covers nearly three-fourths of the earth's surface. Only about 3% of the world's water is unsalty. A leaking faucet can waste ten-to-twenty gallons of water daily. Do you let the water run while brushing teeth? A watermelon contains about 97% water. The human body is about 70% water.

1. Begin Naturally. Read John 4:3-9.

Water is essential for life. In America most of us have never experienced true hunger, but we have each been thirsty. Humans can live several weeks without food but will die in several days without water.

Israel has always been a dry and thirsty land. The annual rainfall is about 25 inches. The dry months are May through October. Jesus and His disciples left Judea and headed toward Galilee. Samaria was in-between the two countries of Judea and Galilee. Jesus rested at Jacob's well while His disciples went into the town to buy food. An unnamed woman of Samaria came to the well to draw water. Jesus began the conversation. A natural topic was to talk about water. She couldn't believe He would talk with her.



Caughman

The first step in witnessing is to find common ground for beginning a conversation.

2. Talk About Real Life. Read John 4:10-14

Some serious questions. What is real? What is real about your life? Do you have a life that is meaningful?

In witnessing, after beginning a conversation, you can then move to a deeper level.

Ask: Do you know that you have eternal life? Jesus talked about real life to the woman at Jacob's well. He persisted in talking about spiritual thirst. It took her awhile to understand. Jesus was the gift of God (v. 10) offered to the woman and to each of us who receives Him.

3. Stay on Track. Read John 4:24-26

I remember hearing the great Southern Baptist preacher, Dr. J. D. Grey say, "Don't do what I do. If a rabbit jumps up in my sermon, I'm going to shoot at it."

When witnessing about your faith, don't take every tangent. Remember your purpose is to introduce someone to Christ!

Jesus stayed straight to the point. In the beginning of John we learned that the Hebrew word Messiah and the Greek word Christ, both mean the Anointed One. The Samaritan woman was trying to process this new information and said, "I know that Messiah, called Christ, is coming and will explain everything." (John 4:25). She was startled when Jesus revealed that He was that One.

4. Watch for New Opportunities. Read John 4:28-30; 39-42.

Watch! Like the signs at a railroad crossing, look and listen! Be alert and watch for opportunities to say a word about our Savior. The Samaritan woman witnessed to the town people and led them to come see and hear Messiah. Many accepted Christ as "the Savior of the world" (v. 42b).

Thirsty? Think of a time that you have been really thirsty. Once when hiking in the Rocky Mountains my husband gave me the last of the water in his canteen. My water supply was gone. My throat was dry and parched from the dusty trail.

Later I told Bill that his gift of water was true love.

God provided physical water on the earth and offers spiritual water to all. Perhaps you feel spiritually dry? David was in the desert of Judah when he wrote, "O God, thou art my God; early will I seek Thee: my soul thirsteth; my flesh longeth for Thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is." (Psalm 63:1 KJV). Because of love, Christ offers Himself to all that receive Him. Read the beautiful metaphor in John 4:10, 14 and 7:37. Do you have eternal life? Jesus is the gift of God. Are you spiritually thirsty? "Come! Take the free gift of the water of life!" (Revelation 22:17).

During September we have sought to better understand real life in Christ. The real life Jesus promised is life to the full. Pray for an opportunity to tell others about real life. In your daily routines this week, notice people who would appreciate a word from you about Christ.

Caughman is a member of First Church, Magee.

Guidelines for submitting news and photographs

The Baptist Record is pleased to publish news and photographs of special events that take place in cooperating churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention.

News submitted for publication in The Baptist Record must be either (a) typewritten, (b) neatly printed on 8 1/2 by 11-inch paper, or (c) neatly printed on standardized forms provided by the newspaper. All articles must be received in writing; no articles will be accepted over the telephone.

News may be submitted electronically to the address below, and must be contained in the message segment of an e-mail form. Due to increasing virus threats,

no text attachments will be accepted. Photograph attachments are permissible.

Please make articles concise. Include the who, what, when, where details of the story, along with a contact person's address and telephone number.

Photographs may be color or black and white. Instant photos and digital printouts are not reproducible. Digital photos may be used if submitted as a JPEG file via either (a) e-mail, (b) three-and-a-half inch floppy disk, or (c) CD. Photos must be clear, sharp, and well-lighted.

All news items are subject to editing, and all photographs are subject to cropping. News items and/or photographs can be published one time only. Deadline for submitting news is one week prior to requested publication date.

Articles that are not date-sensitive will be published on a space-available basis. Requests to return photographs must be accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

Submit news and photographs to The Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. FAX: (601) 292-3330. E-mail: baptistrecord@mbcb.org.

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JIMMY PORTER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
jporter@mbcb.org

LEE YANCEY, CONSULTANT
lyancey@mbcb.org

RITA WOOD, ADMINISTRATIVE SECRETARY
rwood@mbcb.org

Phone: (601) 292-3329

Toll Free: (800) 748-1651
www.christianaction.com

Fax: (601) 292-3350

Calling All Deer Hunters: Help Alleviate Hunger in Mississippi

By Lee Yancey

In 1 Kings 17 Elijah asked a widow of Zarephath for a cup of water and a piece of bread. The poor woman replied, "As the Lord your God lives, I have no bread, only a handful of flour in the bowl and a little oil in the jar; and behold, I am gathering a few sticks that I may go in and prepare for me and my son, that we may eat it and die" (1 Kings 17:12). The scene is a picture of hopelessness. We see a mother preparing the last meal that she and her son will have together on earth. She sees no future, no way out.



Yancey

For many Mississippians, the lack of food is an ongoing issue. 18% of people in our state live in poverty. Almost one out of 5. 25% of children live in poverty, and 14% of households are hungry or at risk of hunger. They frequently skip meals or eat too little, sometimes going without food for an entire day. Nearly 10% of households in Mississippi are at risk of hunger. They have lower quality diets or must resort to seeking emergency food assistance because they cannot always afford the food they need. The Clarion Ledger reported that a survey done by the Center on Hunger and Poverty (Brandeis University, Waltham, Massachusetts) revealed that 3% of Mississippi households surveyed reported food insecurity and hunger in 1998 and 2000. The center, which helped initiate and draft the bipartisan Hunger Relief Act to improve food stamp benefit allotments, defines hunger as the uneasy painful sensation caused by a recurrent or involuntary lack of food and is a potential, although not necessary, consequence of food insecurity. Over time, hunger may result in malnutrition. In the same September 3, 2002, Clarion Ledger article ("Food banks there when next meal isn't" by Sherri Williams), John Alford, executive director of the

Mississippi Food Network, said the amount of food the network distributed increased 22% from 2000 to 2001. Last year they distributed 13 million pounds of food to more than 400 charities in 74 counties. Alford said children consume 48 percent of food from the Mississippi Food Network, senior citizens consume 33 percent, and the rest are the working poor.

While there are government programs that help provide food, is there something that Mississippi Baptists can do? The answer is yes. One way to help is to give generously to the Southern Baptist World Hunger Offering on Sunday, October 13. Funds collected go to provide immediate food relief where it is needed the most. Another way to help fight hunger is by donating deer meat. Hunting season is rapidly approaching, and with it an opportunity to help a hungry family. Mississippi Sportsmen Against Hunger (MASH) is an agency that is hunter supported and collects food for the needy. Since 1992, 175,000 pounds of deer meat and other foods have been donated by Mississippi hunters to benefit the hungry. To make a deer meat donation, hunters should harvest one of Mississippi's estimated two million whitetail deer. Skin and quarter the deer and take any surplus deer meat to one of the MSAH Collection Centers below. It costs the donating hunter nothing to participate. Hunters can donate a whole deer, a front shoulder or anything in between, but the meat should be cleaned, quartered and in good condition. Note that NO ribs or necks are accepted due to the expense of processing for the limited quantity of meat yielded.

Individual County Contacts

- Forrest - Pete Cascio/Cascio Meats (601) 268-2758
- Hinds - Charlie Pike/Broadmoor Meats (601) 922-3461
- Hinds - Mike Triplett/The Buck Shop (601) 362-9922

• Hinds - Dwight Traxler/S&D Deer Processing (601) 885-6474

• Holmes - David Winters/Holmes Co. Cannery (601) 283-4781

• Jones - Jimmy Houston/Houston Processing (601) 428-7289

• Lamar - Farag Mohammed/Family Meats (601) 264-2344

• Lincoln - Ms. Leruie Smith/Country Meat Market (601) 833-0359

• Monroe - Buddy Mobley/Mobley Deer Processing (662) 369-6693

• Montgomery - Larry Greenlee/Greenlee's Shoprite (601) 262-4265

• Newton - Ronnie Myers/Myers Processing (601) 683-6767

• Noxubee - Phillip Knepp/Sunbelt Meats (601) 726-2520

• Rankin - Van Allen/Van's Deer Processing (601) 825-5543

• Warren - David White/Nick's Custom Meats (601) 636-0342

• Washington - Darrell Koehn/Darrell's Deer Processing (662) 335-3323

• Webster - Wallace Sansing/Sansing Meats (662) 263-8228

• Winston - Mrs. Jean Sullivan/Sullivan's Processing (662) 773-2839

• Yazoo - Charles Milner/Milner's Deer Processing (601) 746-6472

If you don't see your deer processor listed above, send an e-mail to info@msah.org.

The Lord provided for the widow of Zarephath and her son through the prophet Elijah. The bowl of flour and the jar of oil was not exhausted throughout the remainder of the famine. Would you allow God to use you and your family to help meet the hunger needs of fellow men and women, boys and girls? Once their needs are met by physical bread, perhaps they will be receptive to the Bread of Life, our Lord Jesus Christ.

The following statistics pertain to hunger and poverty in Mississippi:

Average Monthly Benefit per person: \$67.04

Length of Food Stamp Application: 21 pages

WIC (FY 1999)

Total Number of Participants:

22,993 women
31,231 infants
44,263 children

School Breakfast Program (1999-2000)

Average Daily Student Participation: 153,712 low-income children

Number of Participating Schools: 792 Schools

National School Lunch Program (1999-2000)

Average Daily Student Participation: 286,271 low-income children

Number of Participating Schools: 9,908 Schools
Summer Food Service Program for Children (1999)

Average Daily Summer Participation: 31,580 low-income children

Number of Summer Food Sites: 212 sites

Source:
www.secondharvest.org

Mississippi Demographics (1999)

Population: 992,768,619

Per Capita Income: 920,688

Poverty Rate: 16.1%
(444,000) people

Child Poverty Rate: 22.3%
(167,000 children)

Unemployment Rate: 5.1%

Federal Nutrition Program Participation

The Emergency Food Assistance Program (FY 2001)

Food Grant: \$1,644,656

Administrative Grant: \$752,086

Food Stamp Program (FY 1999)

Average Monthly Participation: 288,057 people

Child Participation: 152,968 children

Average Number of Households Monthly: 115,176 households

If you are interested in receiving Christian Action updates via the internet and will share this information with friends and your church, please e-mail us at rwood@mbcb.org. Include your name, address, phone number, and church name.

SBC chief: churches need own schools

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — Southern Baptist churches should establish Christian schools to develop young disciples and empower kingdom growth through education, said Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) President Jack Graham. The pastor of the Dallas-area Prestonwood Church in Plano issued the call to plant new schools during his address to members of the SBC Executive Committee Sept. 16 in Nashville.

"I think it's time that Southern Baptist churches and associations and groups of churches look more seriously at establishing kingdom schools, Christian schools," Graham said.

"I think it's time we look at not only... equipping young leaders at seminaries and colleges, but we look more seriously at starting at the earliest years, developing disciples and empowering kingdom growth through education."

Bibliocipher

By Charles Marx
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KBRI RVDIR Z CXFR

HDM CD IRADIE

CBNZ EXH, CBXC Z XQ

LMIR VIDQ CBR

WGDDE DV XGG QRY.

XACN CKRYCH:

CKRYCH-NZT

Clue: R=E

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: John Five: Forty-Five.

SBC won't recognize new Missouri group

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP, ABP, and local reports) — The Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) Executive Committee will not recognize the newly formed Baptist General Convention of Missouri (BGM) as a collecting agent for the SBC, following action taken at the committee's Sept. 17 meeting.

Executive Committee members also declined to recommend limiting the number of state conventions recognized by the national body. Their decision was in response to a motion referred to the Executive Committee from the 2002 SBC annual meeting in June in St. Louis.

Bruce Prescott, a messenger to the June annual meeting from First Church, Norman, Okla., and a supporter of limiting the number of state conventions, was allowed the opportunity to speak on behalf of the issue before Executive Committee members voted.

Prescott claimed the rationale given in the administrative committee meeting for adopting the recommendation appeared "to contradict (Morris H.) Chapman's statement in a Jan. 25, 2002, letter to Jim Hill."

Hill is the former executive director of the Missouri Baptist Convention who has been instrumental in starting the new Missouri convention.

Prescott cited an excerpt from that letter where Chapman wrote, "A single state Baptist convention per area is the ideal and best serves the interests of the Southern Baptist Convention."

Prescott did not note that this was one of four underlying assumptions that Chapman outlined as background for measuring how the formation of the new convention in Missouri compared to historic practices and the best interests of the SBC, nor did Prescott acknowledge how Chapman addressed this assumption in the rationale that followed in the letter.

Chapman's letter to Jim Hill can be read in its entirety at Baptist2Baptist.net.

Prescott also said it "appears contradictory to say in Missouri that one state convention per state is in the best interest of the convention and then in Texas and Virginia to deny that recognizing and accepting gifts from only one convention in each state is in the best interest of the Southern Baptist Convention."

The BGCM was recently organized in protest of what members of the new convention contend is a fundamentalist takeover of the older Missouri Baptist Convention. Other states with competing conventions include Texas and Virginia.

Chapman, president and chief executive officer of the Executive Committee, explained the convention's stance following Prescott's remarks.

"Without trying to refute the argument, let me just simply explain it this way. Southern Baptists have taken no action to instruct its Executive Committee, nor has the Executive Committee recommended to the Southern Baptist Convention that any relationship with a state convention be severed and terminated," Chapman said.

"It is our responsibility until the Southern Baptist Convention should choose to do otherwise, to do what we can to partner as best we know how with our state conventions. That doesn't mean that there is total agreement, but it does mean that in the case of several of our long-standing partnerships, these state conventions continue to give faithfully through the Cooperative Program. And we have

sought to honor that effort to give and to support Southern Baptist missions.

"It is the business of the state whether it has one or 20 state conventions. It is the business of the Southern Baptist Convention in each instance to have the prerogative to determine how they're going to relate to any state conventions or any number of state conventions," Chapman added.

The Executive Committee also reactivated an ad hoc committee to study the SBC's relationship to the Baptist World Alliance (BWA). Chapman is among the SBC leaders who have expressed dismay that BWA is considering a formal request from the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship (CBF) to join BWA.

CBF was formed years ago by Baptists unhappy with the growing conservative

closed to outsiders.

NAMB leaders say Southern Baptists will need private investors in order to raise an estimated \$75 million it would take to establish a major presence in television. Currently, NAMB spends about \$6 million a year for FamilyNet, which in turn generates about \$3 million in income.

- Approved a new publication for Midwestern Seminary titled, Midwestern Journal of Theology. The Executive Committee also authorized the seminary's request for a fund raising event called The Vision: Growing Disciples Today to Make Disciples Tomorrow.

- Approved changes proposed by the IMB in the agency's own statement of its ministry assignments. The revisions include incorporating "nurturing church-planting movements," which supporting

Petal Harvey Church receives Eagle



Petal Harvey Church, Petal, is the latest Mississippi recipient of the Eagle Award from LifeWay Christian Resources, in recognition of the church's significant growth in Sunday School. Since 1999, the church's Sunday School enrollment has risen from 993 to 1,238 people, and 15 new Sunday School classes have been added. Average Sunday School attendance has also risen by 135 people. Accepting the award are Wendell Frazier (left), minister of education at the church, and church pastor David Grumbach (right). Wayne Edwards (center), Lauderdale Association missions director and representative of Mississippi Baptist Convention Board's Sunday School Department, presented the award. (BR special photo)

direction of the SBC and its agencies.

Serving on the committee are Chapman, James T. Draper, president of LifeWay Christian Resources; Jerry Rankin, president of the International Mission Board (IMB); Paige Patterson, president of Southeastern Seminary; Tom Elliff, pastor of First Southern Baptist Church Del City, Okla.; Gary Smith, chairman of the SBC Executive Committee; Paul Pressler, a retired judge from Houston, Texas; and Bob Sorrell of Bellevue Church in Cordova, Tenn., outside Memphis.

In other business, the Executive Committee:

- Received a report from the North American Mission Board (NAMB) to request the restructuring of FamilyNet Television from a non-profit to a for-profit subsidiary. Members met in a rare executive session and will act on the report at a later date.

The full Executive Committee met 35 minutes behind closed doors to review "confidential material" provided to committee members and staff. Earlier committee discussions on the issue were also

information describes as "the primary, if not only way, of making the gospel potentially accessible to all people."

The document speaks of "sending" missionaries, as opposed to "appointing," a narrower term in the old statement that doesn't take into account the agency's widespread use of volunteers.

It also adds a reference to mobilizing Southern Baptists in local churches, associations, and state conventions to pray, volunteer, and give sacrificially to missions. At the request of an Executive Committee work group, an added phrase specifies that such financial support is through the Cooperative Program and Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions.

It calls for assisting international Baptist leaders with discipleship and training, but deletes a specific reference to developing "schools."

Some observers have criticized the IMB's recent emphasis on church planting for neglecting institutions like schools and hospitals. IMB officials say that is just a perception.